

Good afternoon, everybody and welcome to the Global Britain plenary session. This session is focused on the UK global role in tackling COVID-19, and I would really like to thank you all for joining us this afternoon. Now, my name is Rodney Berkeley, and I am a Director at the Department for International Trade and I'll be hosting the session today. Now this session is going to look at how departments collaborated internationally in their response and recovery from COVID-19. And by the end of the session, we hope you will understand more about how the UK is leading the role in responding to this global challenge, and how this feeds into the Global Britain agenda. In particular, what we're really keen for you to understand by the end of this session, is how we have collaborated with other countries, how we share best practice, and how we've learned from our experiences. There will be a chance for live Q&A near the end of the session. It is your time, so please do add some questions. And please upvote those questions because we want to hear from you, and we want to make this as interactive as we can. There will also be an online forum for discussion following this session, where we'll have dedicated experts who are going to be hanging around for up to an hour afterwards, just to continue the conversation.

But firstly, I want to say a huge thank you to all of those across government who have been involved in response to this global challenge and to recognise the importance of this work. You know, this is not been an academic exercise. This has been about saving lives, and I do not think there is anything more rewarding in this world than saving lives. So we've been doing a fantastic job. This has been an extraordinary time for many of us. The pace of change has been challenging, and it is having a significant impact on how we work in government and how we as a government project ourselves. Our influence around the world will soon be entering into a new relationship with Europe and will have to evolve and enhance how we collaborate with others, so I hope you're looking forward to the session because I know I am. We have a great panel here with us, and to help us understand some of the challenges and opportunities, I'll just briefly introduce you to the panel and then I'll hand over to them for their two minutes slots, before we go into Q&A. Firstly, on the panel, we've got Sir Patrick Vallance, the government's Chief Scientific Adviser. We have Nick Dyer, acting Permanent Secretary from the Department for International Development. We have Menna Rawlings, she's joining us online today, Director General of Economic and Global Issues at the FCO, Tom Scholar, Permanent Secretary at the Treasury, and Antonia Romeo, Permanent Secretary at the Department for International Trade. So I'd like to now hand over to Sir Patrick to start off. First, brief comments on what have you been doing? What's your reflections on our response to COVID?

Yeah, Ok. Thank you very much. The first thing to say, I suppose, is that if you ever wondered about the importance of being global, then look at a pandemic. You absolutely need to think about this as a global issue. It's something that affects every country in the world, and we're dealing with a previously unknown virus, with new information coming every day. So if you don't become global in your response, then you are trying to tackle this with one hand behind your back, so the science has been international from day one. We started working on this in January. 2 January, I think, was the first day that we started thinking about what we were going to do. In the middle of January, I organised a call with a number of Chief Scientific Advisors from other countries, including the US, New Zealand, Australia and Japan. We talked about a number of things, including the emerging COVID threat at that time, which wasn't on the radar of other countries in some cases, and that's continued. And those meetings have continued. In fact we have another one tomorrow with an increasing number of Chief Scientific

Advisers. So the idea of sharing information has been central to this, and the UK has played its role in that. At the end of January, one of the things that was preoccupying a number of us, and scientists from around the world were thinking about, was what the origins of this virus were and whether, in fact, it could have been released from a lab somewhere. And that work actually put that idea to bed quite early on in January, even though it keeps resurfacing. But it's pretty clear it did not arise from a lab in any sort of design sense. It came through animal transmission. So one of the areas that we now work on in terms of international response from the UK, the epidemic itself, the UK is taking a lead on sequencing the virus to try and look for genetic changes. We've sequenced over half of all of the viral sequences in the world come from the UK, and we share that internationally. The modelling, many of the models involved in the UK response have modelled for other countries as well, in Europe and elsewhere. And of course, issues of which measures to impose and how to release them, we're all learning from each other the whole time, and trying to understand what the impact for example, of opening schools is. In treatments, the UK has really, I think, taken a lead in some of the clinical trials, and the fact that the first drug shown to reduce mortality from COVID, dexamethasone was in a big UK study tells you the importance there, and we've been linked international studies of course, along the way as well, including the WHO solidarity study, vaccines, big international issue, lots of vaccines coming from all over the world. We have to be linked to many as well as the two that are being pursued from the UK, and there is an absolute imperative to make sure we also get those vaccines available to parts of the world that cannot make their own vaccines, and that we're part of making sure this does not become a nationalistic protective view towards vaccines. And then finally, I'd say that SAGE, the committee that's set up to look at emergencies and put the science in, has worked closely with others from around the world. And prior to this, many countries came to look at how SAGE works, to think about how they wanted to get science systems set up, so we've interacted closely there. So this has been a very international response from us. The UK has led parts of it, but importantly, we've been learning a lot from others as well, and this has been a very collaborative effort across the globe.

Thank you very much, Sir Patrick.

Yeah, thanks. Thanks, Rodney, and Patrick's absolutely right in terms of pandemic effecting every part of the world. But you would be forgiven, if you looked at a map of the world, in terms of where the the COVID instances and where the deaths are, you'd be forgiven for thinking that it's actually not happening in Africa at all, because the the maps tend to suggest that Africa has gone off lightly. But I think that's the wrong conclusion to draw, because as the UK is coming out of its sort of COVID peak, many of the poorest countries in the world are just starting to come into their peak. And they're basically four crises going on globally at the same time. The two most obvious ones that we see in the UK is the health crisis and the economic crisis, but in many developing countries, they're also facing a humanitarian crisis. I mean, the UN is predicting and worrying about an increased risk of famine in a number of countries. There's also a rights crisis in terms of people being denied their access to services, and I think there's about 60 elections that have been postponed around the world. So there's a real shift in governance, and this is going to get worse. We predicted within the Department for International Development that an additional 70 million people across the world are likely to fall into extreme poverty because of COVID. And when we say extreme poverty, we mean people who earn less than £1.50 a day, that's £500 a year. There are predicted to be 44 million job losses around the world. 75% of those will be women. And we are seeing when we do tracking studies, and we're seeing

in places like Ethiopia, in some regions in Ethiopia, between 40 and 70% of people have zero income, absolutely nothing at all. And you look in some countries around the world, the Central African Republic has, I think, on the last count, had less than five ICU units in the entire country. So you know, this, these are countries that are really, really suffering from the impacts, economic and health impacts and humanitarian impacts. So what are we doing? We in the UK, we run programmes around the world, and we're very much stepping up in terms of our direct bilateral support. We are learning as much as we can from the experiences with ebola, which basically tells you you've got to tailor your responses to the local context that you are operating in. We are, as Patrick mentioned, working on the vaccines. We are putting a huge amount of money into supporting vaccine development on the search for international candidate vaccines. And we are supporting very heavily, the United Nations in terms of their humanitarian response, but also the likes of the World Bank and the IMF, particularly with debt relief to many poor countries because ultimately, they're going to come out of this and support their own populations and giving them the fiscal space to be able to spend more money by reducing their debts is one way of doing that. But the basic reality is, this is going to get worse before it gets better, and we're tracking this very closely. I'm sure we'll come on to talk about this more, Rodney. But the one message I would leave you with, is as we go into next year 2020 and climate cop, there is a question whether there's a real opportunity here in terms of how do we build back and build back in a way that is considerate of and recognises the opportunities for doing it in a clean and resilient way as well. I think that's a big challenge for us going into 2020

Thank you very much Nick. Could we go to Menna please online?

Yes. Thanks, Rodney, and good afternoon, everybody. And yes, I'm not in the studio, like my colleagues, I am broadcasting live from my daughter's bedroom in Tunbridge Wells, and I'm sure many of you on the line are still also working from home. The first thing I wanted to say is, thank you just echoing Rodney's words at the start. I think, we have truly been a brilliant civil service over the last few months, and that's thanks to the work of all of you and your teams in extraordinarily difficult circumstances. I'll zoom out for a second to the global picture which both Patrick and Nick have touched on, and perhaps just to linger for a second on the stats, 13.1 million cases at the latest count, 570,000 deaths. And if you told any of us six months ago, that we'd be facing those sort of statistics for a pandemic that we've barely heard about, if you cast your minds back to Christmas time, it really is extraordinary. And it has been and will continue to be, I think, quite difficult. But I will come back to some more optimistic points of light at the end of my brief opening remarks. I just want to touch on this idea of global Britain in line with the name of the session, and it's perhaps worth saying that, before the pandemic broke, we've been talking to our Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab, a lot about his vision for global Britain. And he always talked about three things. He talked about really making a success of Brexit, and developing new friendships and partner partnerships with our European allies. He talks secondly, about Britain being a champion of liberal free trade and open society, promoting open trading around the world system, so that we can create jobs and consumer choice for people at home. And he talked about Britain being a moral anchor, a force for good in the world. So really caring about issues like climate change that Nick's just mentioned, but also being a defender of Hong Kong. Sorry, I'll try that, again, being a defender of human rights and including in places like Hong Kong, as you have seen in the media yesterday, but also promoting better outcomes for women and girls around the world and ending poverty. So that was his sort of framing. Fast forward to COVID, and I think we've kept a lot of

those ideas in terms of our approach, so I think the under the force for good heading, Britain's worked really hard to help coordinate a global health response, exactly what Nick's been talking about looking in particular, at the most vulnerable countries that are going to suffer the most from COVID, and how we can help them. We've also been a vital player in the search for new vaccines and new treatments, as Patrick was saying, really using our science superpower and our institutions and our agency to try to accelerate the rest of the race for vaccines and new treatments. And then on the global free trade side, and I'm sure Antonia in particular will say more about this, but we've been working very hard to support the global economy through what's going to be very tough times keeping trade open, keeping supply chain going so that we can keep the toilet roll and the face masks and medical equipment and everything in the shops or available to NHS workers. And as part of that as well, we've really tried to keep markets open to transit hubs around the world open to support the flow of freight, aid, medical supplies, and critically for us in the Foreign Office, to bring Brits home. And just to say on that, you know, we talk a lot about citizens being at the heart of our foreign policy, and I really believe that and that's been tested.

So thank you Menna. Could we go to Tom, please.

Thanks very much, Rodney.

Well to state the obvious, the COVID crisis started as a crisis of public health but very quickly became an economic crisis too, as the measures that government took in every country to control it, had and continues to have, an extremely serious impact on on the economy. Patrick was saying that a pandemic illustrates the importance of global cooperation, and the same is also true of an economic crisis. But this economic crisis is very different from previous crises in two respects. First of all, the size of it, so the hit that in most countries we're seeing to the size of the economy and to growth is bigger than anything in living memory. Indeed, in many cases, bigger than anything since since records began, so it's a it's a huge shock. And it's a shock that is basically happening simultaneously in every country in the world. Nick said correctly that Africa is a few months behind European countries, for example, in in terms of the pandemic, but it's only a matter of a few months. Normally when you have an economic problem in one part of the world, it's partly offset by strong growth in another part, but at the moment, everywhere we're seeing countries suffering. And so that makes for a really, really big challenge for economic policymakers right across the world. Now, the UK has a very, very strong reputation and a very strong history of promoting global economic cooperation going right back to 1944. When the big institutions were created in Washington DC, that act to oversee the global economy. And it's been the case over the decades that when there are economic problems, the UK is always one of those countries getting stuck in, trying to find answers, trying to persuade other people to work together and that's very much been the case in the last few months. So we have regular meetings of finance ministers. In the case of the UK, that would be the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak, and in fact, yesterday, he was on a video call with with his colleagues from the seven largest economies in the world to discuss these things, so there's regular dialogue at ministerial level. Then in the Treasury, we have regular dialogue with all of our colleagues in other finance ministries. So for example, my my colleague, Claire Lombardelli who's the government Chief Economic Adviser, she chairs the network of senior economists from the 20 biggest global economies that are working together on on these issues, and she's chairing regular calls of those again, obviously, all through video conference. Normally

people would meet, but in these circumstances it's all through video conference. I guess there are three particular things that we're trying to work together on. The first relates to development and the things that Nick was talking about earlier, helping the poorest countries who are the least able to deal with and weather this storm, helping them to deal with a shock. And so that's partly about making sure that institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have the money that they need to help. Also, the initiative that Nick referred to of giving the poorest countries some temporary relief on the interest that they have to pay on their debts. And that was an agreement reached in April, very much with UK leadership. We're also

trying to coordinate, share experience, share best practice on all of our emergency responses to the crisis, and I think actually, if you look at some of the things the UK has done, it has been quite innovative. Quite often among the first movers, and I think that's something that is some experience we've been able to take and talk to other countries about. And then the next big area, which we're all really working hard on is, well, what are the policies and what's the coordination that's going to help the world get out of this as the virus comes under control, and then we can all start to look at repairing the economic damage. So right across all these areas, we're in very close cooperation. And I think it's an area where we're really able to make a difference and that's, that's a source of pride, I think, for all of us.

Thank you very much, Tom. Can we go to Antonia please?

Great. Thanks, Rodney. It's great to be here. Delighted we can still do Civil Service Live, even though many of us are still working from home, Civil Service, Live online. So look, I mean, Thomas, you said out of all the gloomy picture for the global economy, I'm afraid from a trade perspective, I don't have much good news for you either. The WTO has predicted that global trade will fall by between 13 and 32% this year. So for an economy like the UK, very reliant on trade, this is pretty significant and potentially quite serious, more than what we're doing to counter that later. Like many departments as the COVID crisis began, DIT had to immediately set up some new projects to help tackle the crisis. One thing that we did almost immediately, working closely with FCO, DHS and Cabinet Office colleagues was to set up a project looking at strategic sourcing for medical supplies. So we started with ventilators, this moves swiftly into PPE protective gear, for the NHS and others and moving on to other medical supplies. Now this became incredibly important because we were seeking to diversify our sources. So a huge number of people around the world in DIT and FCO were tasked with finding new sources for those medical supplies. Many come from Asia, but some from Europe, some from the States. They did an absolutely fantastic job. Over 30 billion items of PPE have been secured and paid for thus far, so that's really significant. And the people who worked on that project can know that they did save lives to Rodney's earlier point. And this may be the story that is never told, but a huge amount of cross government work that went into supporting the NHS and very definitely saving lives. That process led us quite quickly to realise that we did not have in all cases, the resilience of our supply chains and critical goods that we might need. At that point, we set up something called Project Defend, this is overseen by the Dominic Raab, who is First Secretary and this is looking at the resilience of supply chains for critical goods. So that's medical goods, but also other critical what we call category one goods that are not medical. And we're looking at the resilience of those but very much focused with a starting point of what can you do because you can go for example, to the open market, or you can work

with allies to share production also share purchasing of, so that you don't immediately find yourself as Patrick mentioned, in a position where you're seeking to do everything yourself. So global cooperation is very much the name of the game, including in ensuring diverse supply chains and therefore resilient supply chains. And the final point to make is, as Thomas mentioned, we are at the UK is very much a huge supporter of the rules based international system and this is true on global trade as on everything else. So we very much focused on working with the WTO, the World Trade Organisation working with G7 and other countries who are allies to support that trading system and to keep borders open. So something that we had to do quite a lot of at the beginning of the crisis was that when a number of export restrictions were put in place on PPE gear and other critical medical gear, we were very much focused working with allies, global allies on trying to ensure that those barriers were lifted. So although in some ways the trade outlook is not incredibly positive, we are very much at the forefront working with like minded partners of ensuring that we try and keep trade open. Obviously, our big new trade agenda, independent trade policy is going to help support on this but keep trade open, keep all those critical and indeed other goods flowing across across borders is the the name of the game.

Thank you very much Antonia. So it shows that there's an awful lot of work going on across government with regards to our response to COVID and global Britain. And so Patrick, I'd like to come to you first really. It's really good to hear a little bit more about some of those international collaborations, and if there's anything more we could have done or could do.

Well, there's a lot of international collaboration going on. As I said, they range from trying to understand the virus itself, where there's a lot of work particularly around things like the genetics of the virus. There's work going on in treatments where the whole world is looking for new treatments. Some of them are going to be ones that are made by pharmaceutical companies that will be therefore, narrowly available in the first instance because they're brand new, others like dexamethasone that I mentioned, is actually an old drug and can be then made very widely available very quickly.

And the treatment side of it is, of course, partly discovering them now, but also testing them, and that's where clinical trials gonna be important and whether you guys playing a big role.

Vaccines, I mean, the way out of this is, ultimately, either you get a treatment, which reduces the severity of the disease or you get a vaccine. Or eventually you get enough people who actually become immune to it in some way, some other way. But ideally, you do it through treatment or vaccine, and with vaccines, UK has got a really good leading position on that. But we've got two out of 130 vaccines that are being made across the world. And the most likely thing, unfortunately, for every vaccine project is it'll fail. And therefore you better make sure that you're not just resting on your laurels with what looks good now. So the vaccines Task Force has got many vaccines that they're involved with one way or another. And we're also making the vaccines here, linked to other countries as well. Don't want to just make it for yourself. This again, the pandemic thing means whatever vaccine comes, needs to be one that you can use globally across the world. So those are sort of the hard end of it. But then there's the whole thing of what measures are people taking, which ones are they releasing and how's it working? What is the effect on the pandemic in their country? What's the effect on the economy in their country? That requires repeated discussions with people to understand not the headlines, but the data and loads of people across the civil service are working on that in a very impressive way. Now, could we do

more? You bet we could do more. And should we have done more earlier on? Probably. And so I think lots of lessons to learn. But one thing that I will say, there was a big lesson for this and for future emergencies is, data is absolutely crucial. And if you don't get your data flows right early, and the ability to look across government with data, you are trying to do this with one hand tied behind your back, and that will be true for other emergencies in the future as well. So we must look at data flows and data systems for future potential emergencies.

Thank you very much, Patrick, and on the data point, I want to, if I could, bring in Antonia a bit more so data and PPE is mentioned in the fantastic role that government played in procuring PPA. So what were the biggest challenges you found during that process?

Well, I think that I mean, data, of course, ended up being completely essential in understanding what it was that we needed to get hold of. But actually, the starting point for this was really, when we felt, as I say, we started really with ventilators, which was as we were predicting SDHC were predicting what it was that would be needed. We then immediately realised that we would need to do quite a lot of work in order to ensure that we had that supply coming in, and we knew, you know, thanks to BASE and other colleagues what was available in the UK. The question was, what more could be sourced from overseas. So the, what we then said about doing, I mean, the China team was the first team, the China embassy that essentially pivoted in an incredibly agile way and immediately focused you know, on to 24-7 shifts to get hold of PPE, sorry ventilators first, and then we moved into PPE gear and essentially ensure we have the contracts know what we wanted. And that's why the data was very important, understanding what it was that was wanted, we call it the demand signal and therefore that we were able to secure the supply. We then as I say, had to swiftly move out into ensuring we had a more diverse supply. There are teams in Malaysia in Bangladesh in Thailand, and then also close to home in Turkey who did an absolutely fantastic job of identifying sources for crucial PPE gear and then of course, once you found it, you have to both procure it but then you have to get it into the country. So a lot of work including with MOD. I mean, it was a massive cross government effort in order to ensure we have that all you get all that and all that gear into the UK. But I think the big question, going to Patrick's point was for understanding exactly what it is that you need to get hold of, so that when you're going out to try and find sourcing and try and purchase and don't forget, this was a world in which the global marketplace was all after the same particular gear. And as I say, the other thing that we had to do was ensure that we were really using Ministers or Prime Ministers to make government to government interventions, in particular areas where we found that export restrictions had been put in place, which meant that actually some medical supplies which were due to come to the UK and indeed in some cases have been contracted with essentially held at customs in another country because of that restriction. So there was quite a lot of intense work again, across government to to secure those items.

Thank you very much Antonia. And on that point, I wonder if I could bring Menna into this because Antonia has made a really good point about people. It took an awful lot of people to do this and people at post and you know, it would be really good to hear from yourself, Menna. How did they cope with all of this work? You know, obviously they were hunting down PPE and they were out there doing the repatriation of individuals and also engaging in some of those multilateral discussions. Really great to hear from you, Menna. How did the people cope? How did the missions cope?

Yeah, thanks for having me, and apologies for dropping off the line earlier on due to a technical problem, which I'm sure we all grapple with from time to time in this brave new world. The question about people is really interesting, because as I was saying at the start, I think one of the extraordinary things about this crisis is the way we've responded despite having to work from homes, kitchens, bedrooms, etc. And our increasing reliance I think on the technology has been extraordinary. And generally, I think, we've been very innovative and the technology has stood up very well. I think the investments in recent years and more mobile remote forms of working have really paid off. So I think that was part of the answer. I think for some of our posts, it has been really, really hard. We've had to reduce the number of staff in many posts, where we think the health systems are vulnerable and we want to minimise our risk. And that has meant sometimes bringing partners and kids back from post and leaving the employee, the member of staff out there. So we've had all sorts of challenging issues around wellbeing through this crisis, and I have to say, our posts and our people have responded magnificently and we're incredibly proud of that. For me, I think there's something here about resilience and resilience for the UK as a nation, resilience of our international partnerships to help us keep navigating this crisis which is far from over, but also the resilience of our Individual posts and our people. And we focused on that a lot, we really stepped up our communication. You know, we've had regular conversations with all of our heads and missions around the world and our partners at post, and that's been a really important part of it. And my final comment on that is that we're trying to make sure that everyone gets a break. It's very, very busy in Whitehall, as my colleagues will know, and there's a lot going on, including the forthcoming merger of the Foreign Office, with the Department for International Development. But I do think it's vital that everyone finds the time to take a step back and spend some time with their family over the summer to the extent that they can, so that we're fresh and ready for whatever the autumn throws at us. Thanks, Rodney, back over to you.

Thank you very much Menna, and if I could go to Nick. So Nick, speaking about defeat in the work you do, you've mentioned around some of the early poverty which he was trying to, you know, overcome, really in many ways. So what's taking up most of your time recently?

Well, let me just start by

endorsing something that Menna said which is, we've asked an awful lot from our people through this entire crisis, and many said the same within DFID. We've had staff who've been we've had to bring back from the UK, and who are working in really difficult circumstances away from their families. We've got people who have got to do childcare and education and alone. There is a certain amount of loneliness with people working at home. And I'm sure that everybody who is in this audience, there are people who are suffering or struggling with the same issues and I just think we just need to recognise that and just thank everybody who's put themselves out under extraordinary circumstances to keep delivering within the UK and beyond.

In terms of

sorry... I've forgotten the question.

So okay, but what's really been on the top of your mind at DIFID and really keeping you busy with regards to that?

So as you said before, and as I think Patrick eloquently said, no one is safe until everybody's safe. And that's the bold reality here. That unless we can address this pandemic globally, then we are going to increase the risk of a second wave in the UK. Now there are things that we can do to mitigate that in terms of how we control our borders and what we can do in terms of our overseas efforts. We are still not yet seeing the peak in many of the countries that we deal with, and our big focus is how do we help those countries who just do not have the depth of their own economic circumstances to actually get through this crisis. Now a lot of it is about how do you help countries put in social measures that are suitable. I mean, many of the countries that we deal with are just replicating what's happening in the UK and in European countries. Frankly, it's been an absolute disaster because people have just not been able to get access to any work whatsoever. There are no safety nets, and therefore they've got no income whatsoever. So there's a lot we can do in terms of providing policy support and advice in terms of help having people tailor their responses. But then, the key thing is, how do we leverage in as much support we can into these countries. And Tom mentioned the World Bank, and we're a big supporter of World Bank. We are probably the single largest funder of the World Bank, and the World Bank has over the last three months accelerated the support it is given to developing countries. It announced 158 billion pound package of support over the next 18 months, and that could not have happened without the investments and support that we've been giving the World Bank. So how do we ensure that we are leveraging support from other countries? How do we ensure that the vaccines development that Patrick was talking about that countries have equitable access to those vaccines? How do we get global agreement to the norms and standards that will allow equitable access? How do we ensure that the resources are available to buy the vaccines, we start to put all those elements into place?

Thank you very much, Nick, and just building on that point, Tom, I wonder if I can come to you. What countries out there have you seen that have really been responding fiscally, and and financially well to COVID-19? So whichever which of those countries out there, have you said, wow, that's some fantastic response, this is something we can emulate. This is something we can do, who helps you see who out there who are putting together that kind of response.

Thanks Rodney. Yeah, one of the things we spent a lot of time doing is studying what's happening in different countries. Certainly their economic responses, but also the different ways in which they've dealt with the public health emergency because that's been, you know, different countries have done different things on on the lockdown or on testing or tracking and tracing, and we've really tried to learn from that experience, and also look at the different economic responses. We've also quite often found that things that you hear, don't necessarily turn out to be true when you look at them. So when we were getting our business loan scheme up and running in April, it was an absolutely enormous scheme, very complicated to deliver to banks. It took the banks, a week or two to get their systems ready, and we were being told constantly, well in Germany, they're able to get the money out the door within three days or whatever. Actually, when we looked at it, it wasn't true at all, so that was quite important work in terms of building confidence in what what we were doing. I think on the economic side, I would not say that there's any one particular country that's found the magic ingredient because there isn't a magic solution. I mean, one country of particular note is the United States, which is the world's biggest

economy and what happens in US financial markets, it has a massive impact across the rest of the world. I think the federal reserve, the central bank in the US, gave a very, very big and very rapid response to problems in markets really did a great job in terms of avoiding a market meltdown. But I think that's one end of the spectrum. Then at the other end of the spectrum, some of the countries that Nick's been talking about, where they just don't have the resources to fight the problems the way the others do. And so there, I think we've all got responsibility to help and to provide resources. I think what we're doing all the time, and by the way, I should say, this keeps changing all the time, so different countries are taking different approaches to how long they're leaving their emergency measures in place. Everyone recognises they can't go on forever, and they need to be withdrawn at some point. But that is a very difficult judgement sort of how much to withdraw and when. We're just going to keep working with our colleagues in other countries, keep sharing best practice and try to learn together. You know, we all make mistakes as we go on. But the key thing is to learn from them, find out what others are doing, and then try to keep innovating and come up with the best answers that we can.

Thank you very much, Tom, I think if I could ask for a quick fire round, where I could just answer a question just off the top of your head, tell me what your your departments are doing. So how has the global response to Black Lives Matters impacted on the way your department is viewing its international responsibilities in response to COVID-19 and how we promote global Britain? So if I could start with you, Sir Patrick?

Well, first thing is we do a lot of work looking at the effects of the virus on inequality actually, and one of the things this virus has done is exposed and exaggerated inequalities. It is very clear. I mean, you look at who's suffering from it so we're really concentrating on that. We're really working with international partners trying to look at that. And we are in terms of the work going forward, we are asking the question, what can we do as a government officer for science to make sure that all the work we do takes into account this very important lasting inequality? And make sure that the work we do, asking, it as inclusive and diverse as possible for the simple reason that we try and tackle some pretty big problems. And you don't tackle big problems by all thinking the same looking the same coming from the same backgrounds. Thank you very much,

Sir Patrick, Nick.

Well, I think for us, we like to think of ourselves as an institution that cares about diversity and reaches out and helps the poorest people in the world. But actually, I think the key message for Black Lives Matter for us, is that we've taken our eye off ourselves, and what are we doing in terms of our own response to issues of race within our organisation. The key message that I've taken away from the whole Black Lives Matter is that we've done an awful lot of listening. But the the people we are listening to were saying to us, well, okay, you've heard this all before, and frankly, we're now a bit frustrated, and we don't actually believe you're going to do anything about it. The key message for me is that we now have to demonstrably show that we are not only listening, we're not only empathising, but we're actually acting. We've taken our race action plan, and we've put boosters underneath it, and we've made commitments that we can hold ourselves to account for, and we just need to act.

Thank you very much, Nick, and Tony.

Great, well, thanks for having me and you and I work very closely together in terms of what DIT is doing on this. And so there's two types of things that we're trying to do. One is, as you've already suggested in our policies, and things that we do out into the world. And then the other is what we're doing internally in the department. In terms of our policies, somebody pointed out in one of the early sort of listening with a view in expose to subsequently taking action sessions that we had, that we aren't good when we look at things like trade policy, we have specific programmes where we look at what the impacts on gender might be. And actually, we can often be less good at looking at the impact on ethnicity. That's the sort of thing we're drawing up, as you will know, there are a huge number of things that we could potentially do in the context of our policy agenda on this. And I think there's in the space of trade, I mean, this will range from the way that we do trade with certain countries, but also how we assess our new trade arrangements or particular new deals that we might do in that context. So I'm going to speed up because I'm not going very quick fire am I? But but there's lots to say on this. In terms of what we're doing internally, I mean, I completely agree with Patrick and Nick have said. We've got to do more, and we've got to do more about what we are doing in terms of progression in terms of building the pipeline. And in fact, lots of work that Tom and others leading across the whole of the civil service is looking at us.

Thank you very much, Antonia. Could we go to Menna Rawlings, please?

Yeah, thanks Rodney. I think it's all been said in a way but the frame we're trying to use in the Foreign Office and I think we'll try to take this into our new department as well we join with DIFID is learn, lead and lift. So learn, you know, really spend the time each of us and institutionally to listen to our black staff and to understand their stories and try and put ourselves in their shoes more. Lead - we've all got a role to play, whether we're senior leaders or wherever we sit in the organisation to try and lead more conversations on these issues and to bring more diverse voices, and as I've just said, into policymaking. Last but not least lift. I think we can all think about what are we doing in our circle of influence to look for people from different underrepresented groups! Black staff at the moment are absolutely, rightly in the spotlight, but there are wider issues as well about equality in the whole of the civil service and each of us can make a difference if we just reach out that hand and try and bring people with us, thanks to Tom.

Yeah, let me give one example, and that is improving the use of data and equalities impact analysis in our policy advice and policy recommendations. Now there's an example here 25 years ago, when we didn't really do much in terms of distributional analysis. In other words, working out the impact of a particular change in economic policy on people of different incomes. 25 years ago, we didn't do that today, it is completely embedded in our policy advice and we can calculate to a very high degree of accuracy, the impact of different policies on people households, at different points in the income distribution. We can't do that yet with the impact on people from different ethnic groups. Often we don't have the data, and so that's something we want to work on. We are starting to talk to our colleagues in other countries to try to get ideas of where there is best practice. And so let me give you very quickly one example of a country I think, which is going to have a lot to teach us and that's New Zealand. In New Zealand over the last 20 years, they have transformed the way that they've looked at the Maori community there, because they realised that the impact of particular policies was very different on

people from that community. And that became a big issue which they needed to address, and so they now routinely incorporate into all their policy advice and equalities. impact and of that particular ethnic group. I think there's a lot that we can learn, and we would then like to try to spread that as best practice across finance ministries across the world.

Thank you very much, Tom. And the last question from me is one of the uploaded questions. How good was the UK preparedness to deal with the pandemic? What have we learned to help prepare for future pandemics that will be taken up internationally. And so, if I could go with Sir Patrick to start with that question.

Well, the UK had a plan in place for pandemic flum and much of the response is similar, actually, though not all of it. There's a lot to learn about this virus which does have some differences. There was an exercise done in 2017 around that, which show several shortcomings of the response. And I think it's important to reflect on whether those shortcomings are put right in the time because that is key. It is no good just looking at something, did we actually do what we have to do to get those right? And you can see, lots of things took operational departments by surprise in this, and it's always the case when you got something new, but I think there must be lessons to learn about our preparedness.

Right, and from the experiences other panellists have been through, is there anything anybody would like to say in terms of preparedness for pandemics, and more we could do for next time?

Any of the panellists, Nick? Well,

let me take an international perspective because pandemics are international, you can be as prepared as you want in the UK, but if everyone else isn't prepared, it's not going to work. One of our takeaways is that the health systems in many of the poorest countries in the world just cannot cope. If we want to get ready for the next pandemic, we've got to help prepare and build those health systems.

Thank you very much, Nick, and Antinia, any last question?

I mean, likewise, I think that there's a huge amount going on Project Defence is, of course, that's its purpose, not just pandemics. It's preparing. It's looking at all resilience of all critical goods supply chains. But of course, part of that will be making sure that we are on critical goods, critical medical goods, not in the position we were in last time around where we were, like all countries and like many global companies, heavily dependent on certain countries. So I think that's one thing. The other thing I would say, that's been a lesson out of this is the premium attached to agility. So in a way, you'd never know exactly what you're going to be preparing for. The question is, can you bake agility and flexibility into the system and I think in the bits that worked the most well, in terms of our response, it was because those were parts of the system that could very easily flexibly and in an agile way pivot and start to do something new. So for example, overseas teams suddenly being able to marshal people to, you know, identify new sources and purchase them working with them across government, that sort of thing is going to be absolutely essential. So I think keeping on baking in that, that agility is important.

Thank you very much, Antonia. Tom, I don't know if you want to say anything. Yes, he did. Right.

Yes, thanks. Just very much agree with what Antonia has just said. You never know what the world's going to throw at you, it's different every time. The question is, when it's how you react and if you plan and learn from your experience, you react better next time, even if the circumstances are a bit different. One thing we've done a lot in the Treasury in the last few months, is draw on our experience of the banking crisis of 2008-09,, which was also a big global thing. The situation today is in many respects, very different, but the things that we learned there and including the things that we didn't quite get right, but looking back at worked out, how we could how we could have done better. We've really been using that learning to help us this time around.

Thank you very much, Tom. So unfortunately, everybody, we've come to the end of our session! I would firstly just like to thank everybody who's joined online and thank you all, again for your amazing efforts around the response to COVID-19. Many thousands of you have all been seconded into new roles overnight, and it's been an amazing feat, I would say, to just witness as a fellow civil servant. I'd like to thank our panellists for giving up their time, and thank you ever so much for being so open and honest with us around the work of your departments. And for me, I think, Antonia summed it up with agility, I think, Sir Patrick, when you spoke about our expertise in clinical trials, our collaborations, the way we are leading the world on some of this stuff such as vaccines out there, which are in the race, if you want to call it a race. But it's a race where everybody is collaborating and sharing information, which sounded absolutely fabulous and Menna, just to come back to you online, and the fantastic job that the FCO have done overseas in hunting down some of this PPA and also working with DIT to do that, but also the repatriation and all of the multilateral work. Thank you all very much for joining us on this session. As I said, there is an online forum, which is taking place at the moment. If you'd like to continue these discussions, please connect into the online forum. Thank you.